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LETTER DATED 23 SEPTEMBER 1999 FROM THE PRESIDENT OF DJIBOUTI ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In addressing the General Assembly yesterday, I devoted over half of my statement to the never-ending tragedy of Somalia. I have attempted to shed sufficient light on the decade-long disintegration of the country, the rampant lawlessness and insecurity, the misery, hopelessness and deprivation of civil society, the warlords - what they did, what they are doing, and what to do with them; empowerment of civil society, bright spots in Somalia, and the inescapable responsibility of the international community. I strongly urge every member of the Security Council to spend some time sincerely evaluating as well as appreciating the extreme gravity of this unprecedented, slow death of a member State of the United Nations. While no one is suggesting or even remotely contemplating an undertaking à la Kosovo or à la East Timor, operations mounted against serious violations of human rights perpetrated on innocent civilians, it is wholly unacceptable for the Council to reaffirm in a routine manner for almost a decade that "the people of Somalia bear ultimate responsibility for achieving national reconciliation and bringing peace to Somalia". This appeal, unfortunately, had been addressed to the warlords, since Somali civil society has remained powerless, indeed paralysed, all this time and continues to this day.

I am sending you the portion of my statement on Somalia (see annex).

Please have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ismail Omar GUELLEH

ANNEX

Quote Today, I intend to dwell largely on the Somali tragedy and, therefore, I seek your indulgence in the weight I have given this matter. For nearly a decade we have witnessed the relentless disintegration of Somalia, racked as it is with violence, the denial of basic human rights, and lack of government.

Against the backdrop of millions of Somalis living a decade of precarious existence, with alarming scarcity of food and shelter, rampant lawlessness, political stalemate and a bleak future, an all out effort is required to do something. Because, the consequences of shying away from taking measures that have a tangible impact will be continued misery and despair – and a potential for the continued destabilization of its neighbors. This unique situation, indeed tragedy, ought to receive a priority – the kind of serious attention given to other tragedies. We strongly believe that a stable international or regional order depends in large measure on a stable domestic order in all member countries of this organization.

It is a tragedy that the international community is unwilling to acknowledge because it seems there are no vital national interests at stake here – so, the quarrelsome warlords are left to fight it out until a victor emerges, and a degree of order is restored. Political will on the part of the international community can bring peace to Somalia, too. Because of the pervasive indifference and lack of a vigorous and visionary action on our part, Somalia is falling apart – no longer a politically viable entity. Indeed, the continued anarchy in Somalia is indicative of the failure of global governance to serve poor countries in the developing world. The Somali people recognize that too well. A decade of violence, hunger, disease and uncertainty has brought unparalleled level of despair that exists virtually nowhere else in the world. All Somalis, it is safe to say, are living below the poverty line. And the devastating civil war shows no abetting in most regions of the country. Additionally, the country is prone to become a magnet for criminal elements, drug traffickers, terrorists, and a dumping ground of dangerous toxic wastes. Over-fishing in Somalia's unprotected waters by foreigners is also a cause of great concern to us. The latest comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on Somalia accurately notes that the country has degenerated into a "black hole" of anarchy, with no national government or any attributes of statehood. The principal victim of this senseless conflict is an entire generation of Somali children denied access to education.

The United Nations intervention in Somalia in 1992 had all the good intentions to restore peace, stability, law and order. In this respect, it was entrusted with assisting the Somali people in rebuilding their economy, their social and political life; rebuilding institutional structure, achieving national political reconciliation, and recreating a Somali state based on democratic

governance. These laudable intentions have come, unfortunately, to a standstill following the termination of the United Nations Operation in Somalia, due to "the lack of sufficient cooperation from the Somali factions over security issues", while recognizing "the exceptional circumstances, in particular, the absence of a government in Somalia".

Since the termination of the United Nations operation, two hopeful conferences were held in 1997 – Ethiopian-sponsored "Sodere" and Egyptian-sponsored "Cairo". However, both conferences have only succeeded in highlighting the divisions among the warlords on one hand; and among interested countries, on the other. Many countries and organizations have worked relentlessly to restore a measure of governance in Somalia. The focus though has always remained on ways to bring together the feuding warlords in order to assist them in reaching an agreement that would end the stalemate. Seeking a lasting settlement through the warlords, however, as abundantly and unambiguously have been demonstrated throughout this conflict, has proven to be a wishful thinking – uncertainty reins, and the culture of impunity continues. Lately, we have seen the formation of all sorts of political and military alliances across factional lines in a bid to pacify the country, but such initiatives have often been greeted with immediate skepticism and criticism by other factions and even by certain countries. Clearly, not a single factional leader can claim national support or acceptance because the Somali civil society has grown cynical about the habitual political game that is devoid of sincerity, vision and substance.

Now, all agree that the warlords have nothing to show which engenders confidence that they will ever agree on a lasting settlement, much less the implementation of agreed upon conclusions. People are tired of false rhetorics and deception, as they become poorer, their future bleaker, if not dim. Even beyond Somalia, the warlords represent a potential danger. They need to be resisted, for there is the real problem of a "contagion" effect, whereby chronic instability in one country in the Horn may prove a potent threat to its neighbors, if it is not contained or eliminated within a reasonable time. Liberia's seven-year war, with its child soldiers and graphic atrocities against civilians, has helped to set a tragic pattern that has been repeated in Sierra Leone. Obviously, already inundated with weapons, Somalia hardly needs external involvement by way of arms or proxy confrontations, but that is precisely what is now taking place inside Somalia. For all of us, this only increases the worry about Somalia's future.

The challenge that we now collectively face, therefore, is in establishing an authority to fill the vacuum that is continuously exploited by the warlords. There is no remedy in convening more conferences that breed yet more of the same, as has been the case over the last ten years. If we continue to entertain the notion of holding yet more of the so-called "national reconciliation conferences" indefinitely, into the next decade, in search of peace in Somalia, then we are, in effect, saying that the Somali civil society is condemned to an uncertain future, because the international community is not inclined to protect

them from criminal elements that usurped power. Despite the unwarranted "legitimacy" extended to them by the international community, they have never agreed and will never agree, on anything. Appeasing the warlords has not worked; and never will. The Somalis have human rights too; they have no less rights to be protected from oppressive reckless and power-hungry individuals, who continually and freely move from one capital to another, raising funds and securing armaments. Although these individuals are responsible for the destruction of the country, for the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent civilians, uncountable number of casualties, and for the paralysis that continues to this day, the international community did not intervene in Somalia, as one western leader said to justify the Kosovo operation, "to defend humanitarian principles; and to stand up for the values of civilization and justice". The United Nations operation in Somalia was also saddled with mandate ambiguities and there was never an intention to rid the country from the warlords

On the other hand, Kosovo represents a clear case of determined and vigorous action to achieve a specific objective -- to drive the marauding Serb army from Kosovo. And the United Nations operation established for Kosovo is vested with unprecedented power which is justified under the circumstance to exercise near sovereign powers..... it has "authority over the territory and people of Kosovo" including all "legislative and executive powers, including the administration of the judiciary". This mandate is a far cry from that in Somalia. But then Somalia is not Kosovo!

We all agree that the current level of fragmentation cannot be allowed to continue. And, many ideas have been floated in the past. No ideas, however, will succeed or survive, as long as the warlords have the luxury to determine the fate of Somalia; in effect, they continue to exercise a veto over the restoration of peace and national authority. The question is, for how many more years will the Somali society have to wait? Until the warlords agree on a power-sharing coalition? Until a final victor emerges? Forever?

- Liberia reconstituted through strong international efforts. Warlords of varying levels of power and support eventually submitted to international pressures to accept independent, internationally-supervised democratic elections, following a year of transitional arrangements headed by an individual, in fact a woman, not affiliated to any of the warlords. The result of the elections was described as "free and fair", and thus Liberians were able at last to bid farewell to a destructive and intractable conflict. This was indeed an exemplary process in which the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), supported by the United Nations, played a leading role.

Since the advent of the Somali crisis about ten years ago, the United Nations, the OAU, the League of Arab States, OIC, and the Sub-Regional Organization, IGAD, including many countries, both within and outside the

region, have tried to salvage this nation from mayhem, anarchy, and political paralysis through all kinds of conferences, meetings and contacts, with and among the warlords. Sadly, however, the warlords have routinely demonstrated their unwillingness to heed the international community's call to put the good of the country above their individual lust for power and control.

We have to ask ourselves, as leaders of the world assembled here, what to do about Somalia? The time has come, in our view, for the international community to assume leadership in breaking the long silence on this forgotten conflict, by supporting bold, decisive measures against the warlords.

That is why, after deep reflection and taking into account all relevant factors, I am compelled to lay before you today a set of proposals and measures, in phases, that portray our outrage, frustration and impatience with the status quo, perpetuated by the warlords.

Phase I

As I have extensively and with great pain described the dismal failure of the warlords to live up to anything during this long, intractable civil war, I am loathe to support yet another conference held uniquely for the warlords who lost confidence of their people. It is time the Somali civil society including intellectuals, artists and mothers took the responsibility.

The Somali people has matured politically during these years of suffering and knows what it lacks: economic prosperity and social progress, democratic governance, liberty and peace.

In line with the wishes of the Somali people Djibouti is embarking upon measures intended to enhance and strengthen the confidence of the Somalis in themselves, among one another, in their common destiny, to establish a true harmony and understanding between the actors of the economic, social, cultural and intellectual life; to implement with determination, serenity and equity the restoration of political, economic and administrative normality and to promote the culture of dialogue between the Somali people in order to create an enabling environment for the emergence of a new generation of decision-makers.

Djibouti is anxious that the society takes its rightful place, and be able to speak on matters affecting them directly -- liberty, justice, truth, responsibility and transparency.

And on the occasion of a true reconciliation conference these representatives of the civil society, together with the warlords, must come together to agree in definitive terms on the road to peace and national harmony.

A Somalia which is led by the best, among all generations, in particular by those who inspire confidence in their support for the notion of law, justice, and peace in the interest of all; and those who won't exploit the misfortune of their people to gain power, at any price.

We welcome those men and women who have maintained their values, invariably demonstrated responsible behavior, intellectual and spiritual power, and who are ready, free, and willing to accept terminal solutions to this incredible tragedy, in consonance with their cultural heritage.

We are determined to see that the following undertaking emerge from such all-Somalis reconciliation conference:

1. To fully recognizes and accept the principle the Somali people are free to exercise their democratic right to choose their own regional and national leaders; In accordance with an agreed time-frame

2. **The warlords must agree to**:
   a) convert their factions into political parties that compete in elections, if they so choose,
   b) commit to a complete and verifiable disarmament,
   c) submit to the primacy of law,
   d) respect the creation of a Somali police force, that will also integrate the forces of the various militias,

3. The Somali society must agree to the demand of the international community to assist in the restoration of normalcy, law and order and a framework of governance

Provided the warlords fully support or accept the proposals or measures in Phase I, the OAU, the United Nations and the countries of the region need to work together to assist Somalia in its transition to democratic rule. Like in Guinea Bissau, the United Nations will be required to establish a post-conflict peace-building office in Somalia to initiate projects in support of the process, including coordinating and monitoring of legislative and presidential elections.

Phase II

If these straightforward and reasonable proposals and measures, however, are spurned by the warlords, the international community must vigorously demonstrate that it cannot let the persecution of Somali civil society to continue unaddressed indefinitely. Accordingly, the warlords must be charged with crimes against humanity; they must be made accountable for their actions:

- For the abusive use of power, including aiding and abetting wanton persecution of civilians; the egregious violations of human rights; causing state collapse and destruction of the country
- Through endless violence and unpredictable behavior, the warlords robbed Somalia's children of their youth; robbed the nation of hope and a future; and sentenced the Somali people to a precarious existence

And stringent, selective sanctions must be imposed on warlords not agreeing to the demands of the international community to restore peace and a framework of governance – in Somalia:

- They must be confined to their bleak and battered areas;
- Banned to travel freely abroad in pursuance of their sinister motives
- Ban foreign support, or any type of assistance, including money and material
- All their assets in any form anywhere, frozen

Phase III

If the measures outlined in the earlier Phases fail to accomplish the objectives due to obvious obstructions, from the warlords, we would be confronted with two hard choices:

- Continue to be indifferent and do nothing in the decade-old siege of Somalia
- Regional organizations to which Somalia belongs – principally, the OAU and the League of Arab States, with the support of the United Nations and other countries, would find it incumbent upon them to redress the situation under "all necessary means", given the principle that no state, or criminal warlords for that matter, will be allowed indefinitely to commit gross human rights violations and hold a country hostage forever

These are the critical scenarios that we need to talk about because, however one wishes to forget Somalia, it will not simply go away! We must do something about it, and we must do that sooner than later.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that our complacency with the warlords should come to an end, and that any future process should be more closely tied to the Somali civil society. It is also important to report that not all parts of the country are the same, not all are in anarchy. Somalia has many faces; indeed, it is evolving into a country of stark contrasts – between the troubled central and southern regions, and the relatively stable and more peaceful north – namely, the self-proclaimed Somaliland and Puntland regions. These two regions were fortunate enough to escape most of the conflict that ravaged other parts of the country during the 1990s. They have made strenuous efforts in strengthening

security and in carrying out limited economic reconstruction programs largely on their own, since the international community is wary to provide any meaningful assistance on political and security reasons. The reality is that, in the context of Somalia, cities, regions, or communities are organizing themselves to decide their own future. This move toward decentralisation or self-administration by many parts, or communities of the country is fueled essentially by the need to survive. The international community, therefore, needs to support economically these regions or communities that have achieved relative peace, security and development. We must reward those who have made serious efforts to restore security and peace; to protect human rights and to provide basic services to their people, including institutional framework and demining.

Let me also express our gratitude for the United Nations agencies and their partners who have been feeding and caring for the Somali people despite security risks posed to their personnel. However, these laudable efforts seem to indicate some fatigue, even frustration, due to inadequate donor support, as reflected in the weak response to the 1999 United Nations appeal. We urge the international community to continue supporting the Somali people in these extremely difficult times, particularly, in the light of prolonged drought, aggravated by the long running civil war. **End of quote**